

Exploring the potential of smart cities in the design of age-friendly urban environments

Citation for published version:

Woolrych, R, Sixsmith, J, Makita, M, Fisher, J & lawthom, R 2018, 'Exploring the potential of smart cities in the design of age-friendly urban environments', *Gerontechnology*, vol. 17, no. supplement, pp. 67s.
<https://doi.org/10.4017/gt.2018.17.s.067.00>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.4017/gt.2018.17.s.067.00](https://doi.org/10.4017/gt.2018.17.s.067.00)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Heriot-Watt Research Portal](#)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Published In:

Gerontechnology

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Big Issues in Gerontechnology

R. WOOLRYCH, J. SIXSMITH, M. MAKITA, J. FISHER, R. LAWTHOM. *Exploring the potential of smart cities in the design of age-friendly urban environments. Gerontechnology 2018;17(Suppl):67s; <https://doi.org/10.4017/gt.2018.17.s.067.00>*

Purpose The ageing-in-place agenda posits that the preferred environment to age is at home and in the community. This assumes that the home and community represent a positive environment for older people, which requires the assets and supports necessary for healthy and active ageing. Technology has a specific role to play, not only in terms of health and lifestyle monitoring, but in providing the supports for accessing services, social participation, and civic engagement. Smart Cities are defined as urban areas that utilise different types of ICT and IoT to improve efficiency, sustainability and citizen welfare. The Smart City movement actualises urban areas as sites of creativity, innovation and change, yet for many older adults in urban areas remain hostile settings to grow older, compromising rights, opportunities and accessibility. In this way, urban areas can be sites of difference, reinforcing stigmatisation and marginalisation in old age. Whilst the Smart City movement has gained global attention, there has been a paucity of research exploring the role of older adults in this agenda. **Method** This paper draws upon experiences of older adults living in the UK and Brazil, captured through a three-year qualitative research project funded by the Economic and Social Research (ESRC) which aims to explore barriers and facilitators to the delivery of age-friendly communities and cities. **Results & Discussion** The findings identify specific challenges for older adults in terms of community participation, mobility and social inclusion. This paper reflects on the potential role of technology in responding to these challenges, identifying theoretical, practical and ethical issues in the delivery of Smart Cities. Identifying these issues are important if we are to ensure older adults can remain active and independent, whilst utilising technology to support the right to age-in-place.

Keywords: ageing-in-place, technology, smart cities, age friendly cities

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